Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It saddens me that we have been unable to gather for worship, study and fellowship over the last few weeks due to the COVID-19 pandemic and my prayers and thoughts are with each one of you as you deal with the consequences of the extreme measures of social distancing and isolation that our country is currently experiencing. I know that the worship and community of Grace church are vitally important for many of you, and it grieves me that our doors must remain shut for the time being.

Additionally, during this time of uncertainty and social upheaval, Alice Stewart – our Associate Lay Pastor – had to leave for the United States without a proper goodbye. I encourage you to pray for her as she begins this new chapter in her life and ministry, and God willing we will be able to see her again in the future.

Through all of this, I am, however, encouraged by the willingness of all of you and our fellow Canadians to participate in such extreme social distancing as it shows our concern and care for others especially the most vulnerable amongst us. As we live through the uncertainty of this pandemic we must continue to maintain the bonds of community as best we can.

While currently we do not know when our doors will be open again for regular worship, we are in the process of organizing scheduled times for private prayer throughout the week. If you are interested, please contact me, Rev. Graham, to determine a specific time. Furthermore, for those with access to the internet and email we are recording and videoing Eucharist and Morning Prayer Services, for you to participate on Sunday mornings if you choose. Those services are available on our website or through our e-blast.

At this time, I encourage each one of you to reach out to those you know in the congregation, by phone, email or by appropriate face-to-face meetings respecting the current physical distancing guidelines. We must continue to support, rely upon, and pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

One way you can uphold the church in prayer is by participating in either the diocese-wide day of prayer and fasting that Bishop Andrew Asbil has called for on Thursday, March 26th

or in the nation-wide day of prayer that Archbishop Linda Nicholls has called for on Sunday, March 29th.

I encourage you to continue to engage daily with the Scriptures, if you are looking for guidance you can contact me in office by phone or email. There are still copies available of our Lenten reflection on the Gospel of Mark. Spending time with the word of God is an excellent exercise in these trying times – hearing the Good News of God, especially as we prepare to remember and celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Finally, I recognize that this crisis has stretched all of us and made normal activities costlier, the same is true for the church. As you know the church relies predominantly on the offering of the congregation to support our ministry, and while our doors remain shut we are unable to receive these vital funds. Additionally, due to the government’s recommendation against gatherings, many of our rental groups have suspended their operations for the time being. Lastly, this Lent, our congregation committed to raising an additional $6,000 on top of our regular and Easter offerings.

In light of this I am asking you to ensure you maintain your regular and additional offering commitments. You can do this by dropping them off at the office, mailing cheques to the church or I highly recommend that you register for Pre-Authorized Giving (PAG) or Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR), a method of offering that allows the church to receive your donations directly and automatically from your bank account. Along with this letter I have enclosed the registration form, I invite you to strongly consider taking this step for the benefit of Grace.

I recognize that this crisis has made us look at the world differently, make hard decisions and learn new skills but I am confident that God is in the midst of all of this; I am convinced that God can work healing and glory out of the current situation. May we have the faith and courage to believe it.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Graham McCaffrey